



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GREASEWOOD MAN CONVICTED OF FIRST DEGREE MURDER FOR 2002 DOUBLE HOMICIDE ON NAVAJO RESERVATION

PHOENIX – Kenderick Begay, 29, of Greasewood, Ariz. was found guilty of two counts of first degree murder and two counts of discharging a firearm during a crime of violence, by a federal jury in Phoenix. The case was tried before United States District Court Judge David G. Campbell on June 26 and 27. The jury reached its verdict on June 28. The defendant being held after trial. Sentencing is set before Judge Campbell on October 1, 2007, at 3:00 p.m.

The evidence at trial showed that Kenderick Begay had shot Ortisha Chee and Jerel Taliman, both 17 years old and Ganado High School seniors, in the early morning hours of March 28, 2002. At trial, witnesses testified they were driving with the defendant when he stopped the victims' car on a remote road in the Greasewood area. One witness stated that he watched as the defendant retrieved a .30 semi-automatic rifle from his truck, walk up to the passenger side of the victims' car and shot 8-9 times into the vehicle at close range. Victim Jerel Taliman died at the scene but Ortisha Chee managed to drive her car into a nearby housing area and seek help. Ortisha died three days later from her wounds.

The defendant's sister, Mecheryl Begay, was convicted on May 23, 2007, by a federal jury for lying to FBI agents and committing perjury before the grand jury during the investigation of these murders. Her sentencing is set for September 10, 2007, before Judge Frederick Martone.

A conviction for first degree murder carries a mandatory life sentence and a \$250,000 fine. A conviction for a violation of discharging a firearm during a crime of violence carries a mandatory consecutive sentence of 10 years for the first conviction and a mandatory consecutive sentence of 25 years for a second conviction. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Campbell will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict lasted for five years and was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation with assistance from Navajo Department of Public Safety, Criminal Investigations. The prosecution was handled by Ann Birmingham Scheel and Kimberly Hare, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-06-626-PCT-DGC
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